

1999 NOS Managers' Off-Site at Lansdowne, Va.

SUMMARY

On July 13-14, 77 NOS managers and senior staff gathered for the second annual NOS off-site at Lansdowne, Va. *Leadership in Coastal Stewardship* was the overarching theme of the conference. The need to work towards enabling and supporting each and every NOS employee in meeting the complex leadership challenge and building leaders throughout NOS were messages threaded through the two-day session. The conference objectives were to affirm the NOS vision and strategic direction, celebrate accomplishments of 1998/99, focus on continued efforts in key NOS synergy activities and enhance individual leadership skills in the areas of communications, performance management, managing change, handling difficult people and stress management.

Nancy Foster

Ted Lillestolen, Deputy Assistant Administrator, kicked off the conference with a health and status report on our Assistant Administrator, Nancy Foster. He had visited with her over the weekend and reaffirmed her good progress recovering from surgery and noted her upcoming radiation therapy treatment. Radiation therapy is a normal course of treatment after the removal of a tumor. While Nancy's spirits are good and she is anxious to get back to work, her physician has said that it is uncertain how she might be affected by the treatment. She intends to be back at work in approximately 8 weeks. Ted conveyed Nancy's heartfelt appreciation for all of the good wishes, warm thoughts, cards, and gifts she continues to receive from her friends and colleagues at NOS. She is very much in touch with what's happening at NOS, and according to Ted, still "calling the shots". [NOTE: Ted's comments have been slightly expanded to provide the most up to date information on Nancy per her request.]

NOS Vision

The leadership role for NOS in coastal stewardship was affirmed and is embodied by the vision we formulated last year. In essence, if we in NOS do our jobs right, we will realize our future vision:

Individuals and institutions have the right tools and information necessary to preserve, protect and develop environmental well-being and economic prosperity of the Nation's coastal and ocean resources for this and future generations.

Our mission affirms our focus:

To be the Nation's principal advocate for coastal and ocean stewardship through partnerships at all levels. To support and provide for the science, information, management and leadership necessary to balance the environmental and economic well-being of the Nation's coastal resources and communities.

Each NOS Office presented highlights of their Year 2000 focuses and specific planned commitments to "stay the course" in our five strategic goal areas of habitat, hazards, navigation, coastal communities, and organization and culture. Conference attendees provided feedback, suggestions and inquiries to each office for post conference response. An e-mail will go to conference attendees with responses to those inquiries, suggestions and issues by August 13th. (The individual Office briefings, Ted Lillestolen's opening remarks with 1999 accomplishments, and John Oliver's presentation on the Budget and Synergy Team reports will be available in their entirety July 27th on the NOS website).

Accomplishments

NOS successes in the 1998 and 1999 timeframe were plentiful and impressive. Highlights of things to celebrate, which clearly demonstrate leadership and lead us toward realizing our vision are:

- Reorganization Effective February 1999
 - Year of the Ocean Celebrated
 - National Conference
 - Stratton Roundtable & National Dialogues
 - Hammer Awards Recognize NOS Teams
 - Differential GPS Team
 - Coast Survey Chart Modernization Team
 - Coastal and Marine Management Program (CAMMP) Information System Team
 - Sustainable Seas Expeditions Launched
 - Submersible Exploration
 - Outreach & Education Continue
 - NOS Scientists Provide Critical Problem-Solving Support
 - Hypoxia Investigations Continue
 - Workshops to Standardize *Pfiesteria* Monitoring Protocols
 - Seagrass Court Cases-Expert Testimony
 - Sea Turtle Egg Smuggling Court Cases
 - NOS Science Policy Established
 - Nautical Charts Modernization Progresses
 - Electronic Charts-Raster & Vector
 - Data Compilation Speed Increases
 - GPS Technology Advances
 - Height Modernization Planning
 - Provided Surveys for First-Ever GPS Precision Approaches
 - Commerce to Host GPS Executive Board
 - PORTS Capability Progresses
 - Lockheed CRADA Established
 - Local Partnerships Sprouting

- Coastal Marine Demo Project Expands
- Management Programs Expand
 - Georgia and Minnesota Join CZM
 - Kachemak Bay, AK, and Grand Bay, Mississippi NERRS Designated and GTM, Florida is on the way
 - U.S.S. Monitor Expeditions
- Oil Spill and HazMat Response and Assessment Successes
 - Contship Houston – Florida Keys and other Damage Assessments progress: Unocal, North Cape, Julie N
 - New Carissa and other Response Actions
 - CRC Program Expansion to State-Led Sites
- International Outreach Grows
 - International Coral Reef Initiative Support
 - IUCN/World Commission on Protected Areas Support for Dr. Foster
 - Global Integrated Coastal Management (ICM) Activities
 - U.S. China Bilateral Activities - ICM
- Hurricane Disaster Response Successes
 - Bonnie, Georges, Mitch
- Employee Development Gains Momentum
 - Rotational Assignments Established
 - Intern Participation Booming
 - Career Employment Program Implemented
- Information Infrastructure and Communications Growth
 - State of the Coast Report Grows
 - New NOS Homepage and New Sanctuaries Webpage
 - Sustainable Seas Support – GIS and Webpages
 - CSC is FGDC Gateway – Coastal Geographic Data
 - Y2K Readiness

NOS Budget Highlights

John Oliver presented an overview of several current budget activities. He discussed:

- FY 1999
 - Supplemental Appropriation for Hurricane Mitch
 - Dept. of Commerce and NOAA reprogrammings
- FY 2000
 - Mark ups to date and major factors that have affected the appropriations process
 - Breakdowns of the FY 2000 requests for NOS, Lands Legacy, Clean Water Initiative, Year of the Ocean, and other requests
- FY 2001
 - Status of the budget formulation process
 - Breakdown of NOS requests and increases
- FY2002
 - NOS Planning process which will begin October, 1999

In addition, John summarized the current NOAA and NOS budget formulation process and put out a call to all managers for their ideas on how to improve the NOS process.

Synergy Activities

Five synergy activities identified as priorities at last year's Lansdowne off-site were briefed. Status reports and recommendations to the Senior Management Council (SMC) for next steps were provided. Additionally, the NOS support to the Hurricane Mitch activity was highlighted. Each activity is noted below with SMC decisions for next steps and action. (The individual project briefings will be on the website on Tuesday, July 27th).

- Disaster Response: The ultimate product of this effort is envisioned to be an NOS operational plan. When it is completed, the team will be disbanded and the plan will become an NOS operational practice. The SMC approved the team's next steps recommendations and will commit the necessary resources. The team is additionally tasked with exploring other event response opportunities with costs/benefits and potential funding sources.
- Dredging: The team is tasked with writing a short white paper on NOS interests, capabilities and philosophy on dredging. The alternative roles for NOS within the larger NOAA role must be reflected in the white paper. In the meantime, all NOS dredging projects will continue while committing time to the vision formulation.
- Nutrient Pollutions: The team is tasked with formulating a white paper providing alternatives for the NOS role and strategy in nutrient pollution. The recommended next steps provided by the team are endorsed including formulation of a criteria, delineation of alternative sites, and a plan with required resources.
- Spatial Data: The SMC endorses the team's next steps and would like an emphasis on focusing on "low hanging fruit". The team should pursue 6-12 month low resource investment opportunities that have a high rate of return. Chemical and biological data should be included in the scope of the near and long term focus areas.
- Coral Ecosystems: The SMC emphasized that this effort must be a subcomponent of the NOS Habitat long-term vision and strategy. Therefore, the Coral Synergy Team is "on hold" until the SMC itself formulates the NOS Habitat strategic vision. It is on the agenda for September. In the meantime, NOS will focus on meeting the mapping requirements laid out in the Coral Executive Order Task Force. Special Projects will have the lead for NOS on the mapping initiative and facilitate a cross team effort. The SMC will be personally engaged in the efforts all along the way.
- Hurricane Mitch: The Hurricane Mitch effort is applauded by the SMC as an excellent example of the effective interaction, outgrowth and result of the Disaster Recovery Synergy Team. The SMC fully support all continued efforts.
- Remote Sensing Team: The SMC clarified this effort as a cross-cut tool rather than a synergy team or effort. The SMC will revive the team report and discuss the implications and follow up necessary in the August timeframe.

Best Practices for Synergy in NOS

Conference participants collaborated in a lessons learned interactive activity on synergy and provided input on Best Practice for NOS on working across NOS Office lines. Participants offered perspectives on when a project becomes a "synergy" project. A criteria is being formulated for NOS application as a result of the input. A protocol or Best Practice is also being formulated and will reflect the recurring themes gathered in the conference. Highlights of the Best Practice features follow:

Best Practices – Recurring Themes

- Clear focused scope, problem definition, and desired outcomes.
- Visible SMC and above leadership commitment support (Chair or

- “Godparent”).
- Designated and empowered leader.
- Sufficient resources - time, resources, space, and administrative support.
- Commitment of member time and back-up for job responsibilities.
- The right team skill mix, clear roles, responsibilities, and clarity of commitment.
- Regular interface, dialog, feedback, and evaluation by SMC. Course corrections, as appropriate.
- A clear plan with milestones, check points, and endings.
- Measures and recognition for success.
- Provide visibility and total NOS responsiveness to meet team needs and mission.

Operating Principles – Recurring Themes

- Encourage innovation and initiative.
- Allow for mistakes and encourage risk-taking.
- Provide ongoing open communications and information flow for the team and all of NOS.
- Pursue excellence.
- Provide total NOS responsiveness and support, as necessary.

Leadership Development Workshops

Each participant attended two different workshops, focused on enhancing leadership abilities in the areas highlighted as improvement targets by the SFA and the NOS 360° process. The workshop options included:

- Being Effective In a State of Constant Change
- How to Deal With Difficult People
- Leadership Can Be Learned
- Effective Communications and Teamwork
- Stress Management

Evaluations of each workshop were quite positive. Many managers felt they walked away with new or enhanced leadership and management tools and learnings. The SMC has agreed to explore offering a similar mini workshop series throughout the year for all NOS employees. An announcement and schedule will come out in the Fall.

Executive Session

The SMC met on Thursday, July 15th. They critiqued the off-site and offered considerations for next year including:

- Holding Office briefings back in Silver Spring as a pre-conference activity for many folks to attend.
- Providing more “hands on” teambuilding at the off site.
- Linking the Lansdowne event with the annual awards activity.
- Designing the agenda to have each day with a mix of interactive sessions and training modules.

A large part of the day was spent discussing next steps and feedback to the synergy team on their efforts to date and direction for the future. This discussion was summarized earlier in the report.

Other SMC decisions included the development of an NOS Annual Report for FY 1999 that will publish the organization's significant accomplishments and convey future direction to employees, constituents and partners. The SMC will be personally involved with its development. It will be distributed before the end of the calendar year.

The SMC session was a very positive and frank gathering. NOS senior leadership has committed itself to working together in cooperation, collaboration and even conflict, when necessary. In all cases, the NOS leadership team is solidly together, supporting the NOS commitment to coastal stewardship and anxiously awaits the return of its leader and greatest NOS supporter, Nancy Foster.

Conclusion

Overall, the time at Lansdowne was positive, collegial and forward-looking. In a federal environment of continuing dwindling resources, NOS managers are energetic and committed to leading the coastal stewardship challenge for the millenium.